

Cultivating a Caregiving Supportive Campus Culture: A Toolkit for Academic Leaders

*“There are four kinds of people in the world:
Those who have been caregivers;
Those who currently are caregivers;
Those who will be caregivers;
And those who will need caregivers.”*

-Rosalynn Carter, Former First Lady of the United States

Who is a caregiver at UMBC? A Caregiver at UMBC is a member of our community who tends to the needs or concerns of someone within their circle of friends and family who needs help; the person needing assistance may be a child, or an adult or older adult with short- or long-term limitations due to illness, injury or disability. Caregivers manage the physical, emotional and practical needs of another person, while also managing their own life, needs, family, and career.

This toolkit focuses specifically on faculty caregivers, though, we encourage academic leaders to use this toolkit to consider ways they can also specifically support staff and student caregivers in their areas.

It is likely that over the course of their career, nearly all faculty, regardless of family status, will need flexibility to adjust the balance between their academic and personal lives for the birth or adoption of a child, personal illness or disability, or illness of a partner, parent, or other relative. UMBC's ability to enhance the institution's competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining its best faculty depends largely on it being a campus culture that values and supports both the work and family/personal life needs of all faculty over the course of their career. Providing supports for work-life integration, enhances faculty engagement and commitment to the institution, helps to reduce stagnation and burnout, and contributes to a happier and healthier academic workforce. Caregiver supportive colleges and departments that affirm the experiences of caregivers are essential to the continued vitality of UMBC as a university that values inclusive excellence.

At the institutional level, maintaining effective work-life policies related to caregiving responsibilities provide faculty protections from discriminatory and/or retaliatory conduct, allow for workplace flexibility, provide leave options, and other supportive resources. Meeting legal obligations is a necessary component of a caregiving supportive campus culture. However, to truly be a caregiving supportive campus, faculty must be made aware of the options, supports, and resources during recruitment and at regular intervals throughout their careers.

Deans and Chairs play a key role and have a central responsibility in cultivating a caregiving supportive campus culture by: understanding the importance of a caregiver supportive unit, being familiar with the relevant work-life policies, knowing the appropriate campus offices to

make referrals, sharing resources, and reinforcing cultural practices to assist all faculty. The ability to use many of the work-life policies is an entitlement for eligible faculty, and not an area for negotiation. This toolkit has been developed to assist academic leaders as they seek to recruit and retain the best faculty.

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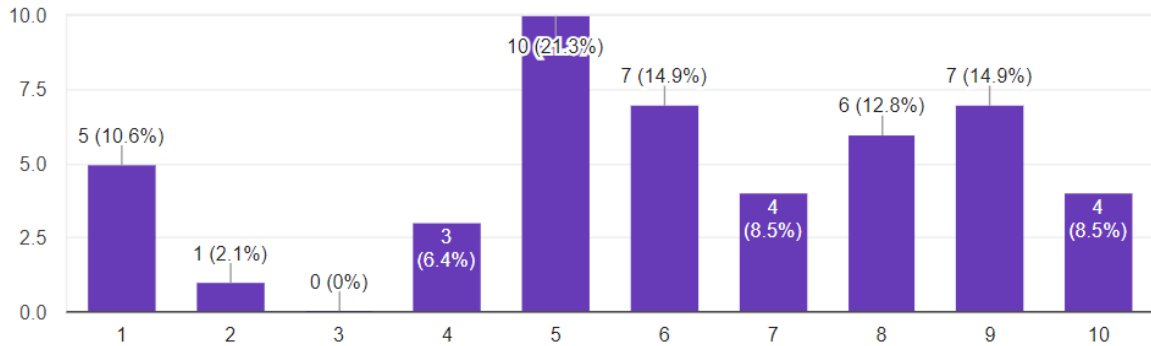
The Rationale for Actively Promoting a Caregiving Supportive Culture

The [2021 UMBC's Faculty Caregiving Advisory Committee Listening Sessions and Survey Report and Recommendations](#) illustrates the urgent need for both affirming and consistent support of faculty caregivers.

The question of the level of support from UMBC for caregivers elicited a range of responses that suggest that although the pandemic heightened the challenges for faculty caregivers, the university can do more to help support caregivers in general.

Rate the level of support from UMBC related to your caregiving roles before the pandemic.

47 responses

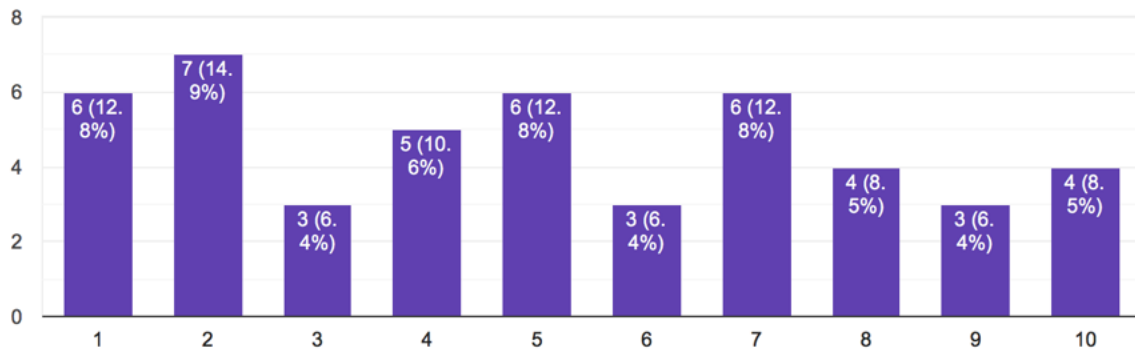


10.6% of faculty caregivers rated UMBC’s support of caregivers as 1 or “poor” prior to the pandemic and 19.1% (or slightly less than one-fifth of the respondents) rated the level of support before covid as 4 and below. In addition, slightly over one-fifth of the respondents rated the level support as 5.

Rate the level of support from UMBC related to your caregiving roles during the pandemic.



47 responses



During the pandemic the ratings for support for caregivers was even more varied. More than half (57.5%) of respondents rated UMBC’s support at 5 and below. On the other hand, nearly one quarter (23.4%) of the respondents rated UMBC’s level of support for caregivers during the pandemic as 8-10.

As the comments below indicate, faculty perception of the level of support from UMBC is determined largely by departmental culture. Faculty with chairs who are attuned to the needs of caregivers give high marks to the university for its support of caregivers while faculty in departments that do not embrace a family-friendly culture feel isolated and/or afraid to voice their need for support. As one faculty respondent noted, there is also a potential equity issue when the duties of caregivers are shifted over to others who are not caregivers.

High level of support

- *“I told my chair and others this summer that I was pretty overwhelmed and prior to any official statements from higher up my chair was 100% supportive and agreed to have me step down off of chairing a committee. Other UMBC people enabled me to cut back on some wider university commitments as well. I feel everyone was very supportive; my chair really went out of their way right away to brainstorm and discuss ways to make everything more manageable.”*
- *“My department head is supportive, understanding, and tremendously collegial. I couldn’t ask for more.”*
- *“My department was excellent in allowing my teaching schedule to accommodate the responsibilities of dropping off and picking up my children from school.”*

Some support

- *“I think that the administration is aware of these pressures, but we have not addressed them within the culture of the campus nor seen significant policy shifts or supports. The work of triaging students and access has taken up most of the effort.”*
- *“Here is the challenge: when one faculty gets time off for family leave or arranges flexible work with the chair, the work has to go somewhere... I think some faculty (who don't have children or dependents) start to feel they need an equivalent ability to ask for flexibility. Frankly, there simply needs to be less work to pass around. The administration needs to stop adding new processes and expectations onto faculty and chairs. Spreading it around flexibly is helpful, but does not solve the problem.”*
- *“Departments vary widely in supportiveness. If your department isn't supportive you have no good options.”*

No support

- *“There is little formal institutional support. There are also career consequences for taking advantage of what support there is. Telling departments to ‘work something out’ depends on too many factors to consistently be helpful.”*
- *“There is no support and I am managing three households including my own with K-12 children.”*

Silence/fear of being “mommy-tracked”

- *“Since my children were born, I've worked only to hide my parenting responsibilities for fear of backlash, and actual experiences of not being offered positions, funding and respect that I can do my job with potential parenting distractions.”*
- *“I don't disclose my caregiving role. Maybe one or two colleagues know about my situation but not the depth of my caregiving.”*
- *“Everyone is really understanding. But no one has actually done anything to help. I feel like I'm allowed to do less at work, but at the expense of being mommy-tracked and seen as not dedicated to my job... When we say we need help because we're caregivers, it's not a caregiving problem, it's a mommy problem. So we don't say it.”*

Data from both the survey and listening sessions suggest that the support for caregivers prior to and during pandemic varied across colleges and departments. This is a problem that we must all work together to resolve. Support should not be contingent on having an allied leader. Rather it is the responsibility of all campus leadership to understand and implement existing campus policies, share resources, and cultivate a caregiver supportive culture to assist all faculty caregivers.

Creating a Caregiving Supportive Department

Ten Essential Steps to Cultivate a Caregiving Supportive Department

It is vitally important that the leadership in departments and programs are familiar with UMBC's policies, resources and cultural practices that enable faculty to integrate work and family/caregiving needs. Here are the recommended steps to achieve this goal:

1. Understand what it means to be a caregiver supportive leader. This includes incorporating the following steps below into your practice. Setting clear expectations, while also being creative and equitable with policies and practices is key.
2. Review and assess your unit's current practices and climate around family friendliness and caregiver support. Listen to what is and isn't being said by caregivers. *Reviewing both the [faculty](#) and [staff](#) caregiver reports released in the summer of 2021 may help determine what practices you can consider integrating and/or reinforcing and policies that you must follow.*
3. Familiarize yourself with campus policies and resources that apply to your faculty who may need caregiving accommodations. Promote these policies and resources within your unit so that resources are available to the people who need them, rather than having employees need to seek them out.
4. Discuss work-life boundaries, including email and text norms with your units, and consider ways to protect everyone's personal time, including your own. Model your own work-life boundaries.
5. Make the use of family/caregiver supports and leave options the standard for conducting business in your department rather than viewing them as exceptions or "special privileges." Encourage faculty and staff to support their colleagues' personal lives and circumstances.
 - Actively highlight, advertise and support your department's caregiving accommodation practices and policies and procedures for all faculty - this helps assure faculty that they won't be arbitrarily disadvantaged in promotion, advancement, or compensation.

6. Be proactive about recruiting and retaining diverse faculty for your department, including those who may have temporarily slowed down their career for caregiving reasons. Acknowledge the ways in which URM faculty may take on invisible labor through the mentoring and support of other URM faculty, staff, and students and value and credit this critical labor.
7. Establish and maintain transparency in the promotion and tenure process, and advocate for your faculty who have used family leave accommodations policies through the promotion and tenure process.
8. Implement small changes that can have a significant impact on the culture of your department. These changes can include
 - Family-friendly scheduling of meetings, seminars, and receptions, taking into account the competing and often simultaneous demands of work and caregiving.
 - Varying the times of events so that the same people are not perpetually excluded.
 - Retaining elements of virtual meetings and blending them with traditional in-person meeting
 - Encouraging collegiality that supports family identities (i.e. attending campus events that family members can join such as Homecoming or athletic events or creating department specific gatherings like picnics).
 - Allocating department funds for caregiving when faculty are traveling for work.
 - Acknowledging the diversity of faculty needs.
 - Reflecting and balancing the ways in which the larger field or industry's culture your department operates within impacts your own department's culture and practices related to caregiving.
9. Become conscious about unconscious bias issues concerning caregiving and gender. Assess your own bias, and ask others in your unit to consider implicit bias around caregiving issues. To assess possible unconscious biases, visit [Harvard's Project Implicit site](#).
10. Maintain "zero tolerance" for discriminatory and disparaging comments and behaviors about family caregiving.

Recruitment and Hiring

- Actively highlight the family-friendly policies, benefits and resources available at UMBC and within your department for all faculty recruits and new faculty. Do not make assumptions about who may or not be a caregiver. Share the information with everyone. Utilize the Provost's website tab for caregivers to inform job candidates of caregiving supportive policies and programs on campus.

- Communicate that your department is an inclusive community in which faculty with caregiving responsibilities can flourish.
- Provide prospective faculty members and new faculty with opportunities to talk to junior faculty members within the department who can share their experiences balancing their caregiving responsibilities with their university workload.
- Offer faculty recruits and new hires the opportunity to meet with representatives from caregiving-supportive groups at UMBC such as the Women's Center, WISE (Women in Science and Engineering), the LGBTQ Faculty and Staff Association, the CAHSS Faculty Women's Network. For a full list of all faculty affinity groups, visit facultydiversity.umbc.edu.

Retention, Advancement and Tenure

- Maintain open communication about caregiving policies and programs. The more information employees receive, the greater the likelihood that they will perceive the environment as open and the chair/supervisor as someone they can trust. Faculty are often reluctant to utilize policies for fear of negative repercussions particularly associated with promotion and tenure, sabbatical, awards, and compensation.
- Work with faculty members facing special personal circumstances (e.g., birth/adoption of a child, personal or family health situation) to provide flexibility and/or modified work assignments.
- Maintain open communications with your junior faculty members who have taken advantage of family accommodation policies to ensure that they feel supported by the chair in addition to their faculty mentor.
- Ensure transparency in the promotion and tenure process. The criteria for advancement should be clear and concise. Chairs should keep their faculty informed of these expectations.
- Review committees should be directed to focus on quality and total quantity of scholarly productivity rather than time since degree or job hire so that faculty who slow down due to family obligations are not unduly penalized in the peer review process.

Include a pull quote from report:

- "Caregivers need to feel empowered and absolutely supported to draw hard lines in the sand and thick boundaries around what they can and cannot do. Caregivers need to be reassured that biases in our evaluative systems (especially regarding opportunities for leaves, pay increases, etc.) will not set them back even further."
- "What can the university do to shift to a more holistic view of productivity for all faculty? That may increase equity in the tenure and promotion process across demographics."

Caregiving Supportive Benefits & Resources

While UMBC offers a wide variety of supports, certain benefits are available based upon faculty status and/or based upon to whom the caregiving is being given. Keep this in mind while providing these resources to your faculty members.

- [Family Support for UMBC Faculty brochure](#) which includes information about the following supports:
 - Annual and Personal Leave
 - Collegially Supported Leave
 - Creditable Sick Leave
 - Family Medical Leave
 - Redistribution of Duties

Caregiving Supportive Laws & Policies

There are a number of federal, state, and local laws and regulations and University System of Maryland (“USM”), and UMBC policies that describe the supports and legal protections for faculty with caregiving responsibilities. Some of the major subject areas covered include:

- Eligible faculty are allowed to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave within a leave year for their own serious health condition, the serious health condition of a family member, or to care for a newborn or newly-placed adoptive or foster child. ([USM II-2.31-Policy on Family and Medical Leave for Faculty](#) implementing [the federal Family Medical Leave Act of 1993, 29 U.S.C. Section 2601 \(2012\)](#))
- A faculty member who is the spouse, child (of any age), parent, or next of kin of a covered servicemember may use up to twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave in a single twelve- (12-) month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness. ([USM II-2.31-Policy on Family and Medical Leave for Faculty, Section VI. Military FML Entitlement](#))
- A mother has a right to pump milk upon returning to work and entitled to reasonable break time and a clean, private space to express milk for their infants up to one year after each child’s birth. A bathroom or restroom may not be designated as a lactation facility. ([USM II-2.25-Policy on Parental Leave and Other Family Supports For Faculty Section V. Supports for Nursing Mothers](#) and [Section 7 \(r\) of the Fair Labor Standards Act-Break Time for Nursing Mothers Provision](#). UMBC has designated lactation rooms available on campus. See “Additional Resources” below.

- Eligible faculty are allowed a maximum of 12 weeks of Parental Leave to help balance the needs and demands due to the birth or adoption of a child. Parental Leave runs concurrent with Family and Medical leave (if the faculty is eligible for FMLA) ([USM II-2.25-Policy on Parental Leave and Other Family Supports For Faculty](#))
- It is prohibited to discriminate against a faculty member or applicant based on a past pregnancy or pregnancy-related medical condition or childbirth; to discriminate based on a faculty member's intention or potential to become pregnant; and to discriminate against a faculty member because of a medical condition related to pregnancy. If a faculty member is temporarily unable to perform their job due to a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, they are entitled to be treated the same as others who are similar in their ability or inability to work but are not affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. ([Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 \(Title VII\), as amended by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 \(PDA\)](#), [UMBC Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy](#), [UMBC Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Harassment, and Gender Discrimination](#))
- No faculty shall be discriminated against or otherwise experience reprisals in any appointment, evaluation, promotion, tenure or other employment-related process as a result of utilizing parental leave or any other form of leave taken for care giving or other family support options. ([USM II-2.25-Policy on Parental Leave and Other Family Supports For Faculty, Section VI. Protections For Faculty](#))

Legal Considerations & Examples

- Department chairs are considered an extension of the organizational leadership, meaning their actions, inactions, and/or the personnel decisions that are made will be attributable to the University. For this reason, chairs need to have some knowledge and be aware of the legal issues relevant to the faculty in their department with caregiving responsibilities.
- Discrimination against an employee with caregiving responsibilities, violates the law if the unlawful disparate treatment is based on the employee's sex and or if the unlawful disparate treatment is based on a family member's disability.
- The discrimination can take the form of bias against caregivers and can be subtle or blatant.
- Caregiver bias can occur when assumptions made about employees with caregiving responsibilities, results in circumstances that affect personnel decisions, including who gets hired, promoted, entitled to leave, and/or terminated. These assumptions about caregivers may also be compounded by biases related to race, age, sexual orientation, national origin, and other protected categories. Examples of common biases and stereotyping of caregivers to avoid:
 - caregivers, including pregnant women, are unreliable
 - mothers are not willing to travel or work long hours

- fathers with caregiving responsibilities are poorly suited to caregiving and denied leave
- caregivers that work part-time or flexible schedules are less committed to their work

- If at any time you have questions about a situation, reach out to your Academic Dean for assistance. You may also seek consultation with the Provost's Office.
- If a faculty member is concerned that they have been subjected to discrimination and/or retaliation as it relates to their pregnancy and caregiving responsibilities, you can refer the individual to the University's [Office of Equity & Inclusion](#) for a consultation and/or [to file a report](#).

Additional Resources

- [Care@Work](#)
- [UMBC's Y Preschool](#)
- The [myUMBC Moms and Parents group](#)
- [Lactation + Wellness Rooms](#) on campus
- [All Gender Restrooms](#) and Changing Stations
- [Provost Caregiving Website](#)

Points of Contact for Further Questions and Support

- Benefits: Human Resources
- Legal Considerations: General Counsel
- Family Support Plans: Deans' office
- Questions, concerns and ideas about campus climate and culture change for faculty caregivers: Faculty Caregiving Advisory Committee